

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6209

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2067

LIMDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS AMBASSADOR KEATING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, XF

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER RABIN RABIN'S MEETING WITH CODEL O'NEILL

SUMMARY: IN TWO AND A HALF HOUR MEETING WITH CODEL O'NEILL APRIL 4, RABIN STRESSED ISRAELI DESIRE FOR PEACE AND DEFENDED GOI POSITION IN RECENT NEGOTIATIONS, THE COLLAPSE OF WHICH HE BLAMED ON EGYPT. IN THE FACE OF PERSISTENT QUESTIONING BY CODEL, RABIN GAVE NO SIGN THAT KEY POSITIONS OF GOI WOULD CHANGE IN ANY WAY, THOUGH HE SAID ISRAEL KNEW THAT SOME WAY TO NEGOTIATE A WAY TOWARDS SETTLEMENT HAD TO BE FOUND. CODEL SOUGHT TO IMPRESS ON RABIN THAT CHANGED POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN US WOULD REQUIRE CLOSEST SCRUTINY OF AID REQUESTS. CODEL SAID AMERICAN WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE AID WOULD BE CONDITIONED BY DEGREE OF CONVICTION THAT PARTIES IN MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE WERE WILLING TO MAKE CONCESSIONS FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE. RABIN MADE ISRAEL'S CASE FOR CONTINUED US SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

1. RABIN BEGAN HIS PRESENTATION TO CODEL BY STRESSING

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THAT, IN ISRAELI VIEW, ONLY REAL ISSUE INVOLVED IN

CURRENT SITUATION CONCERNS "PEACE". GOI HAD THOUGHT OF STAGED NEGOTIATING PROCESS IN THESE TERMS. ISRAEL HAD ACCEPTED THIS KISSINGER CONCEPT FOR ITS OWN REASONS-- INTERESTS OF GOI, GOE AND US HAD COINCIDED ON THIS.

2. ISRAELIS WERE AGREED THAT ANY AGREEMENT REACHED HAD TO SHOW SOME MOVEMENT, EVEN SYMBOLIC MOVEMENT, TOWARDS PEACE BECAUSE ISRAELI TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS WOULD HAVE REPRESENTED A TANGIBLE REDUCTION IN ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC CAPACITY TO DEFEND ITSELF FOR WHICH SOME RETURN WAS REQUIRED. RABIN THEN GAVE A THOROUGH EXPLANATION ALONG FAMILIAR LINES OF GOI VERSION OF ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL OFFERS, ALL OF WHICH HE SAID, GOE HAD REJECTED. GOI FELT GOE HAD OFFERED "PRACTICALLY NOTHING". GOI HAD DIMINISHED ITS "NON-BELLIGERENCY" REQUIREMENT FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM PASSES AND OIL FIELDS, BUT HAD RECEIVED ONLY VAGUEST RESPONSE.

3. RABIN THEN DISCUSSED ELEMENT OF "TIME" IN NEGOTIATIONS. ISRAELIS COULD NOT ACCEPT AN "INDEFINITE" TIME ELEMENT IN AN AGREEMENT, BUT REQUIRED SOME FIRM ASSURANCES THAT IT WOULD HAVE RESPIRE OF 3-4 YEARS FROM PRESSURES EXERTED AGAINST IT. WHEN THIS CONCERN WAS EXPRESSED DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS, THE BEST THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER COULD SAY WAS THAT HE "HOPED" A TWO YEAR AGREEMENT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. EGYPT HAD INCREASED ITS OFFER OF RENEWAL FROM 6 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR, BUT THIS WASN'T ENOUGH. GOI WAS ALSO VERY LEARY OF ANY ARRANGEMENT REQUIRING PERIODIC UNSC APPROVAL, SINCE USSR OR CHINA COULD ALWAYS USE VETO TO BLOCK PROPOSALS THEY OBJECTED TO. RABIN DISCUSSED OFFERS MADE BY GOE: 1) TO SPLIT PASSES, OR 2) GOI AND GOE TO WITHDRAW EQUAL DISTANCES FROM PASSES. AFTER FURTHER DETAILING REASONS WHY GOI WAS UNABLE TO ACCEPT--IE IT RECEIVED NOTHING SIGNIFICANT IN RETURN--RABIN NEVERTHELESS CONCLUDED THAT "WE MUST CONTINUE TO TRY TO MOVE TOWARDS PEACE".

4. RABIN STRESSED EGYPTIAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR BREAKDOWN OF TALKS, SEVERAL TIMES QUOTING PUBLIC REMARKS BY SECRETARY THAT EGYPTIANS WERE FIRST TO ANNOUNCE THEIR SUSPENSION. HE CONCLUDED HIS LENGTHY PRESENTATION
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WITH FURTHER JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOI POSITION IN THE TALKS, AND A STATEMENT THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE AWARE OF HOW MUCH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANTED A SETTLEMENT.

5. DURING QUESTION PERIOD LASTING ONE AND A HALF HOURS, RABIN ANSWERED CODEL QUESTIONS BY GIVING FAMILIAR ISRAELI POSITIONS ON PALESTINIANS AND PLO, RELATIONS WITH ARAB STATES,

ISRAEL'S AID REQUIREMENTS, ETC. WHEN ASKED HOW LONG HE ESTIMATED ISRAEL'S VERY LARGE AID REQUESTS SOULD BE REQUIRED, RABIN DESCRIBED ISRAEL'S DEFENCE BUDGET, ITS DIFFICULTIES, ETC, AND WITHOUT DIRECTLY ANSWERING QUESTION ADMITTED THAT THIS WOULD DEPEND ON CIRCUMSTANCES. WHEN ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF FUNDS WERE NOT APPROPRIATED, HE SAID HE SAW NO ALTERNATIVE ISRAELI POLICY; ISRAEL WOULD JUST HAVE TO PURCHASE FEWER ARMS FROM US.

6. IN THEIR QUESTIONS, SOME MEMBERS OF CODEL EXPRESSED VIEW THAT THEY WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES IN ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN ACCOUNTS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. MANY QUESTIONS SUGGESTED A BELIEF THAT GOI HAD TAKEN A HARD LINE AND HAD BEEN INSUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE IN VIEW OF THE VERY LARGE ISSUES AT STAKE. THIS IN TURN WAS RELATED TO GOI REQUESTS FOR US AID. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, IN PRESENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CLIMATE, WOULD WANT ALL AID REQUESTS SCRUTINIZED CAREFULLY. THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE AID IN MIDDLE EAST AREA WOULD BE CONDITIONED BY DEGREE TO WHICH THEY WERE CONVINCED THAT THE PARTIES CONCERNED WERE WILLING TO MAKE CONCESSIONS REQUIRED FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT.

7. THERE WAS SOME INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN AT GENEVA. RABIN--"WE ARE NOT AFRAID OF GENEVA, BUT DOUBT ANYTHING GOOD WILL COME OUT OF IT.." THERE WAS ALSO CONSIDERABLE PROBING BY CONGRESSMEN ABOUT JUST WHAT "PEACE" AND "NON-BELLIGERENCY" MEANT. RABIN ATTEMPTED, WITHOUT COMPLETE SUCCESS, TO DEFINE THESE TERMS TO CODEL'S SATISFACTION.

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ACTION H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6210
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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8. CONGRESSMEM EMPHASIZED CHANGE IN ENVIRONMENT IN US AND STRONG TREND TOWARDS ISOLATION. RABIN WAS ASKED TO GET PARTICIPATIONS OF POWERFUL JEWISH LOBBY IN US TO HELP ON US SECURITY/DEFENCE REQUIREMENTS, AND FAST* THERE WAS SOME MERRIMENT AND PROTEST WHEN RABIN SAID HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN US DOMESTIC POLITICAL ARENA. THEN, SERIOUSLY, HE SAID "MANY FREE COUNTRIES QUESTION WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE US."

9. CONGRESSMEN ALSO REPEATEDLY STATED THEIR VIEW THAT SADAT WAS A MODERATE LEADER GENUINELY SEEKING PEACE. RABIN COULD NOT AGREE THAT SADAT WAS "MODERATE" AT LEAST AS FAR AS ISRAEL WAS CONCERNED. CHAIRMAN O'NEILL SAID "IF IN 3 MONTHS YOU ARE AT WAR, IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD YOU WILL BE SEEN AS MISTAKEN IN NOT HAVING SEIZED POSSIBILITY OF SETTLEMENT. YOU TOOK A HARD LINE POSITION, WHICH SUGGESTED A CHANGE IN ISRAELI POLICY ABOUT ACCEPTING THE STEP-BY STEP APPROACH." TO THIS RABIN REPLIED EMPHATICALLY THAT ISRAEL DOESN'T WANT WAR. GOI KNEW THAT A POLITICAL SOLUTION COULD NOT BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY MY MILITARY MEANS. YET ISRAEL COULD NOT AFFORD TO LOSE A WAR SINCE THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE ITS LOSS OF EXISTENCE.

10. RABIN ACKNOWLEDGED ("LET'S BE CLEAR") THAT WITHOUT US
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SUPPORT, ISRAEL COULD NOT BE AS STRONG AS IT WAS. WHEN PRESSED ABOUT ISRAEL'S RELIANCE ON US, RABIN REPEATED PREVIOUS STATEMENTS THAT GOI POLICY WAS NOT TO GET IN POSITION WHERE MAJOR POWERS HAD TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCAL CONFLICTS (EXCEPT, OF COURSE, IN SUPPLYING ARMS). IN RESPONSE TO OTHER QUESTIONS, RABIN INDICATED THAT DESPITE ITS "TRUST" IN THE US, ISRAEL DID NOT HAVE MUCH CONFIDENCE IN "GUARANTEES" AND HE DID NOT BELIEVE MULTI-POWER GUARANTEES WOULD WORK.

11. CONGRESSMEN FREQUENTLY QUOTED SADAT IN SEEKING TO ELICIT RABIN'S VIEWS. CHAIRMAN O'NEILL SAID SADAT BELIEVED US HAD A WORLD LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP BRING ISRAEL TO AN AGREEMENT. "HOW DO YOU ANSWER?" RABIN REPLIED BY CITING US PRESSURE IN 1956 FOR A SINAI WITHDRAWAL, A WITHDRAWAL WHICH HE SAID EVEN THE US RETROSPECTIVELY SAW WAS UNWISE--IT DID NOT BRING PEACE, ETC. GOI DID NOT BELIEVE "DICTATES" COULD BE THE WAY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS. (FYI: CONGRESSMAN CONTE TAPED CODEL SESSIONS WITH BOTH

RABIN AND PERES. HE AGREED TO MAKE TAPES AVAILABLE TO
DEPARTMENT THROUGH GENE KRIZEK.)
VELIOTES

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